



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

February 9, 2022

The Honourable Jennifer Whiteside

Minister of Education

PO Box 9045, Stn Prov Govt

Victoria B.C. V8W 9E2

educ.minister@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Whiteside,

Subject: Response to FNLC Letter on FSAs

The British Columbia School Trustees Association (BCSTA) is writing to express support for the letter sent to you on November 18 from the First Nations Leadership Council (FNLC) regarding the importance of the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) data as a tool for equity in education in British Columbia.

Boards of education share with the FNLC a deep commitment to closing the achievement gap for First Nations students in B.C. We are equally dedicated to fulfilling the responsibilities of boards of education and the provincial government as outlined in the British Columbia Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA).

As leaders in this sector, we are acutely aware of the importance of robust student data collected from a variety of assessments that is used to best understand how the sector is performing. Such data is also a critical part of enabling schools and districts to focus on improvement while meeting individual student needs.

Comprehensive system-wide data is central to illuminating and evaluating how the system is meeting the needs of students traditionally underserved by our sector. It is only through full student participation that we can properly comprehend gaps in performance and identify strategies to eliminate such gaps. We also believe that a regular review of all provincial assessments should be incorporated into a comprehensive provincial assessment program.

Your government, through the introduction of the anti-racism data legislation, has shown that it understands the importance of leveraging disaggregated data to support meaningful system changes. This legislation clearly outlines the role that strong, relevant data plays in identifying and eliminating persistent patterns of inequity. Student life chances have the potential of being improved through a similar application of data collection and use within the education sector.

Over the years, the efforts to remove the FSA from schools have distracted all of us from a critical conversation regarding the performance of subsets of students. In an effort to improve outcomes for Indigenous children across the province, and in support of the FNLC, boards of education support the continued use of system wide standardised assessment as a critical tool for equity in educational outcomes within the B.C. education system.

We concur with the FNLC that there is much work to be done to improve educational outcomes for First Nations students in B.C. Rigorous system-wide student data is one of our most important resources in addressing this critical issue, and we believe that working together we have a collective responsibility to improve the efficacy of this data.

In our co-governance relationship, boards of education support the call to uphold the legal commitments of the BCTEA and ask that you support boards of education in their efforts to have the most comprehensive set of student data available. Working together on this priority will broadly improve educational outcomes, and most importantly eliminate systemic inequities for Indigenous students.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Higginson

President

British Columbia School Trustees Association

CC: Terry Teegee, Regional Chief, BC Assembly of First Nations
Leah George-Wilson, Co-Chair, First Nations Summit
Ray Harris, Co-Chair, First Nations Summit
Stewart Phillip, President, Union of BC Indian Chiefs
Tyrone McNeil, President, First Nations Education Steering Committee
Christina Zacharuk, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education
Flavia Coughlan, President, BC Association of School Business Officials
Andrea Sinclair, President, BC Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils
Kasari Govender, Human Rights Commissioner, BC Office of the Human Rights Commissioner
Darren Danyluk, President, BC Principals' & Vice-Principals' Association
Teresa Downs, President, BC School Superintendents Association
Teri Mooring, President, BC Teachers' Federation
BCSTA member boards of education
Suzanne Hoffman, CEO, BCSTA